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FEDERAL WRITERS' PRO-
JECT. ILLINOIS.

CAIRO GUIDE.

(1938)



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CAIRO.



AMERICAN GUIDE SERIES

American Guide Series

CAIRO GUIDE

Compiled and Written by
FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT (ILLINOIS)
Works Progress Administration



*Greetings to
Rev. & Mrs. A. S. Buchanan*

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Foreword

Of all the towns of Illinois none offers more interesting possibilities to the maker of a descriptive and historical guide book than Cairo. As Director of the Federal Writers' Project for Illinois, I have enjoyed the privilege of sharing in the making of the present book. I wish to express my personal appreciation to James Baxter, who wrote the text; to Mildred Waltrip of the Federal Art Project for Illinois, who made the illustrations; and to Miss Effie A. Lansden, Dr. Van Andrews, and Mr. Ray Williams of Cairo, and Mr. Ralph M. Light of Chicago, who gave generous help without which the Cairo Guide could not have been produced.

JOHN T. FREDERICK.

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General Information

Railroad Stations: Illinois Central, North Cairo (bus service from downtown district); Mobile & Ohio, 8th and Jefferson; New York Central, 2nd and Commercial; bus from 904 Commercial to Poplar Bluff, Mo., for Missouri Pacific.

Bus Stations: 200 Commercial for Tri-City Transportation Co.; 706 Washington for Mohawk Stages; 715 Washington for Union Bus Line; 904 Commercial for Egyptian Motor Lines, Missouri Pacific Trailways, and Dixie Greyhound Lines.

Taxis: 10c per person within city limits.

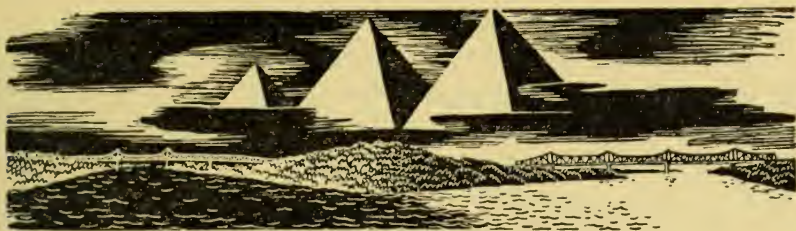
Accommodations: Five hotels in the business district.

Recreation: Two theatres in downtown section; tennis at St. Mary's Park, 28th and Holbrook; municipal swimming pool at 2400 Sycamore; steamboat excursions from Ohio Levee at variable dates; golf (*daily fee*) at Egyptian Country Club, 10 m. N. on US 51; fishing (black bass and crappie) and excellent goose-shooting at Horseshoe Lake, 15 m. NW. on State 3.

Shopping District: On 8th St. between Washington and Commercial Aves.; on Washington and Commercial between 6th and 9th Sts.

Street Order and Numbering: Avenues and tree-named streets extend NW. and SE. These thoroughfares are intersected by numbered streets beginning S. at 2nd St., and continuing N. in sequence.

Information Services: Cairo Association of Commerce, 216 7th St.; Cairo City Office, 102 10th St.



Cairo: Fore and Aft

CAIRO (315 alt., 13,532 pop.), seat of Alexander County, lies on a narrow deltaic peninsula at the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, 125 miles southeast of St. Louis, Missouri. Although in Illinois, a Midwestern state, the city is as far south as Tunis, Africa. Winters are mild, snow is infrequent, and spring begins in February. The exotic ginkgo flourishes, together with great mulberry trees and widespread magnolias. Canebrakes cluster in the bottoms; back-country hills are frosted with cotton. On summer nights Negro jug bands play at street corners for pitched coins. Biscuits, fried catfish, and hash-browned potatoes compose a favorite menu.

The Ohio and Mississippi flank the city on the east and west. Cairo, however, has since its founding spurned the Father of Waters and hugged the shore of the lesser stream. The limestone-revetted Ohio Levee, where in former years docked the finest packets on the western rivers, is a mile-long backdrop for squat stern-wheelers that shove huge barges into riverside terminals. The skyline above the levee, given marked regularity by water-front shops that date from the heyday of steamboatin', is broken by the spire of St. Patrick's Church and the cupola of the Halliday Hotel. Three bridges, one at the north and two at the south, connect the city with cross-river Missouri and Kentucky.

The framework of Cairo is bent midway to fit the curved peninsula on which it rests. Principal thoroughfares swing from northwest to north-north-west near Center Street. Main avenues south of this point parallel the Ohio River, their cross streets extending like rungs in a ladder. Washington and

Commercial Avenues, originally planned to provide for the surplus trade of the Ohio Levee, today compose the business district while the shops on the levee are deserted. Commercial Avenue is lined with buildings effusively ornamented in the "mercantile emporium" manner of the eighties. At night their pompous façades are splotched red and blue by neon signs advertising clothing, groceries, and house furnishings.

The land company officials who platted the southern part of Cairo about a century ago, astutely divided the area into lots of less than average size. Thus many houses in this section are built almost wall-to-wall within a few yards of the street. Residential architecture, generally, conforms to styles common in southern Illinois. Wood is the usual material; porches bulk large on fronts invariably pentagonal. In the area bordering St. Mary's Park trim bungalows of modern design face pretentious Victorian mansions. Houses of this kind, complete to mansard roof and lookout tower, are scattered throughout the city. Other types of dwellings range from picturesque structures with balconies of filigreed iron, to small houseboats beached chip-like on the Ohio shore.

In the center of Cairo, west of Washington Avenue, live the 4,575 Negroes who comprise approximately one-third of the population. A substantial civil group, they are represented in business and the professions. Cairo is the birthplace of Hale A. Woodruff, modernist Negro painter, referred to in the *Atlanta Constitution* as "one of the modern masters."

Cairo has eleven churches for whites and an equal number for Negroes. The school system includes four grade schools, a junior high school, and a high school for whites; three grade schools, a junior high school, and a high school for Negroes; a parochial high school and two parochial grade schools. The major civic, social, and fraternal organizations are each represented, most active of which are the Kiwanis, Rotarians, Elks, Masons, Knights of Columbus, Business and Professional Women's Club, and the Association of Commerce. The last five named have permanent quarters.

Warehousing, transshipping, lumber milling, and cottonseed processing are the principal industries. Egg-cases,

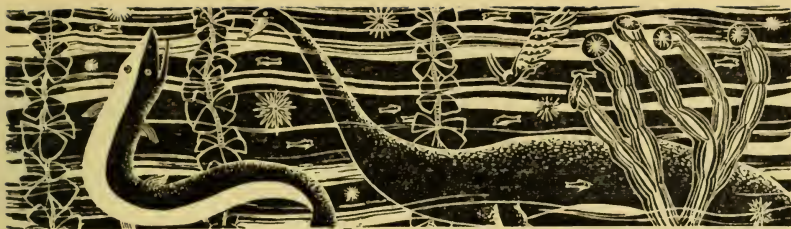
overalls, icecream and dairy products are also manufactured. The industrial section is ranged along the lines of the five railroads which enter at the north and branch to the east and west. Sugar from southern refineries, small grain, and cottonseed are stored in six warehouses. Four mills produce cottonseed oil and cottonseed livestock feed. Eleven firms deal in lumber; two large planing mills are at the north outskirts. Terminals are maintained by three barge line companies. More than 600,000 tons of freight are transferred annually between barge and boxcar.

The alluvial land surrounding Cairo produces oats, corn, wheat, clover, alfalfa, and numerous vegetables. Watermelons are grown extensively in neighboring Missouri, tobacco in Kentucky. The hill country ten miles north produces cotton, peaches, and apples. Sharecropping is practiced to a limited extent. Commercial mineral resources of the region include limestone, fuller's earth, and tripoli or "silica."

Cairo has the commission form of government. A pumping station, an incinerator, and three parks are municipally maintained, together with a well-manned police force and two fire departments.







In the Beginning

ALEXANDER COUNTY was inundated by great inland seas during most of the Paleozoic or "ancient life" era. Silurian limestones and Ordovician sandstones are exposed along the Mississippi bluffs in the vicinity of Thebes. Thick strata of Devonian chert, interbedded with thin limestone, compose the bedrock of western Alexander County.

At the close of Devonian time southern Illinois was elevated and underwent erosion. In the succeeding Mississippian period a sea covered the entire Middle West. The skeletal remains of crinoids, trilobites, brachiopods, and other creatures that inhabited these waters, compose limestone strata that outcrop in the Cache River bluffs northwest of Ullin.

Southern Illinois was later elevated and, subsequently, inundated. Rivers from as far north as Canada flowed into the new sea, carrying silt, sand, and clay. Near the beginning of Pennsylvanian time the sea withdrew and nightmare forms of life appeared: cockroaches a foot long, cone-bearing trees with leaves shaped like grass, and dragon flies with a wing spread of twenty-five inches.

The seas became comparatively fixed in the Mesozoic or "middle life" era. In the millions of ensuing years wind and water completed countless cycles of erosion on the exposed surface of southern Illinois. Huge reptiles spawned in brackish lakes, and, throughout Tertiary time, grotesque mammals overran the land. All plant and animal life was exterminated, however, by glaciers that formed at the north and spread southward into Illinois during the Pleistocene period.

The southernmost of the glaciers halted short of present Harrisburg. Thus southern Illinois, in marked contrast with glaciated central and northern Illinois, retains its rugged pre-Ice Age appearance. In Williamson County the prairies roll headlong into a rocky barrier, known as the Illinois Ozarks, that extends through Pope, Union, Hardin, Johnson, and southwestern Jackson County. Williams Hill in Pope County rises 1,065 feet above sea level.

A lobe of the Illinois Ozarks forms the terrain of northwestern Alexander County. Hills are here precipitous, valleys end at sheer cliffs, and streams are brief and rapid. South of this area the land flattens out at what was once the valley of the Ohio River, and extends table-like to the delta of the Ohio and Mississippi. The low watermark at the junction of these rivers is the lowest point in Illinois (268 feet).

In what is comparable to the past moment of geologic time, mound builders inhabited the southern section of Alexander County. Several mounds that remained near the contemporary community appropriately named Mound City, have been incorporated in a levee that encloses the region. Later the Osage, Tamaroa, and Shawnee roamed Alexander County and hunted bear, raccoon, and opossum on the forested peninsula where Cairo now stands.





Canoe and Keelboat

PERE MARQUETTE and Louis Jolliet, the first white men to explore the upper length of the Mississippi River, glided past the site of Cairo in the summer of 1673. "After having made about twenty leagues due south, and a little less to the southeast," Marquette afterwards noted, "we came to a river called Ousboukigou (the Ohio) This river comes from a country on the east, inhabited by the people called Chaouanous (Shawnees). . . . A little above the river . . . are cliffs where our men perceived an iron mine, which they deemed rich. . . ."

La Salle's expedition, en route to the Gulf of Mexico, reached the site of Cairo in February 1682. "Forty leagues from Tamaroa is the river Ouabache (the Ohio) where we stopped," recorded Father Zenobius Membre, chaplain of the expedition. "From the mouth of this river you must advance forty-two leagues without stopping, because the banks are low and marshy, and full of thick foam, rushes, and walnut trees. . . ."

Although the foregoing passages constitute the whole of the written references made to the site of Cairo by the earliest French explorers, it is safe to infer that they recognized the peninsula at the junction of the rivers as a vantage point and described it as such in oral accounts of their discoveries. For in 1702 Charles Juchereau de St. Denys, lieutenant general of the jurisdiction of Montreal, obtained a royal concession near the mouth of the Ohio River within which to establish a tannery.

Juchereau, Father Jean Mermet, twenty-six Frenchmen, and a group of Mascouten hunters canoed down the Missis-

issippi in the summer of 1702 and set up a fort and tannery named Va Bache, about five miles north of where Cairo is built. Juchereau's establishment is variously listed on eighteenth-century maps of the Northwest as "Vieu Fort," "Fort François," "Old Fort," "Ancient Fort," and "French Fort Ruined."

Juchereau's hunters roamed neighboring Missouri, Kentucky, and southern Illinois. Within two years they are said to have killed and skinned thirteen thousand buffalo. Juchereau planned to bring his family to Va Bache. A permanent settlement would have perhaps taken root had not the expedition been ravaged by an unidentified disease in 1703. Juchereau was among the first to die. Many of the survivors joined the French colony at Mobile. Va Bache was abandoned in 1704.

Lambert Mandeville, next in command to Juchereau, afterwards related in a memorial on the minerals of Illinois that part of the skins and leather stored at Va Bache had been stolen by Indians and the remainder ruined by flood waters. The despoiled cache may have given rise to the name of the river that empties into the Ohio four miles north of Cairo; the stream was thereafter known as "the Cache," its present name.

"There is no place in Louisiana more fit . . . for a settlement than this," Xavier de Charlevoix, a Jesuit missionary, observed of the land at the confluence of the rivers in a letter written at Kaskaskia in 1721. "Nor where," he continued, "it is of more consequence to have one. . . . A fort with a good garrison would keep the savages in awe, especially the Cherokee who are at present the most numerous nation of this continent. . . ."

Charlevoix's advice was not heeded, however, and the labors of the French were concentrated in the American Bottom, a narrow flood plain that parallels the Mississippi from Alton to Chester, Illinois. Cahokia, St. Phillippe, Kaskaskia, and Prairie du Rocher were established in this area before the middle of the eighteenth century. Products of these villages soon began to funnel down the Mississippi to New

Orleans in promising amounts; the grain alone thus received during 1745 totaled forty thousand tons.

The war between France and England for possession of the Ohio Valley, touched off by the Battle of Great Meadows in 1745, temporarily blighted the economic development of the American Bottom villages. The French in the course of the war built Fort Massiac (later misnamed Massac) on the Ohio River about thirty-five miles northeast of the site of Cairo.

Following the Treaty of Paris (1763), whereby France ceded the disputed territory to England, the Philadelphia firm of Baynton, Wharton, and Morgan obtained the trade rights to the French villages. A string of flatboats descended the Ohio River from Pittsburg in the early spring of 1766, wound north past the Cairo peninsula, and arrived at Kaskaskia on April 5th. Cargoes of rum, wire, shoes, clothing, musical instruments, guns and munitions, and kitchen utensils were thereafter transported to the Illinois country by this route until the frontier trade was disrupted by the Revolutionary War.

Gen. George Rogers Clark, commissioned by the Commonwealth of Virginia, entered the Illinois country with a small force in 1778, and, aided by the French colonists' hatred for their conquerors, captured the British posts at Kaskaskia, Cahokia, and Vincennes. In a letter to Thomas Jefferson on September 23, 1779, General Clark wrote: "I am happy to find that your sentiments respecting a Fortification at or near the mouth of the Ohio is so agreeable to the ideas of every man of any judgment in this Department. It is the spot that ought to be strong and Fortified, and all the Garrisons of the Western Country Dependent on it. . . . For want of such a post I find it absolutely necessary to station an armed boat at the point so as to command the navigation of both rivers."

The land to which Clark referred was subject to seasonal rises of the rivers and for that reason the fort, named in Jefferson's honor, was built on the east bank of the Mississippi, five miles downstream from the site of Cairo. As part of Clark's plan to maintain possession of the frontier, pioneers from Virginia and eastern Kentucky were induced to

settle in the neighborhood of the fort. The Chickasaws, angered by this invasion of their territory, and incited by an English agent named Colbert, attacked the fort in August 1781.

The defenders of Fort Jefferson, short of water and subsisting on green pumpkins, held their position for six days. At last the Indians withdrew and many of the besieged settlers promptly left the region. Among those who departed was Capt. James Piggott, later founder of East St. Louis; among those few who dared to remain were several members of the Bird family of Virginia.

The Birds subsequently settled on the west side of the Mississippi, opposite the site of Cairo where, in 1795, a station fort was established at the direction of Don Manuel Gayoso de Lemos, Governor of Spanish Louisiana. Abram Bird bought land there in 1798 and the area came to be known as Bird's Point, its present name.

The old French fort, Massiac, was rebuilt in the summer of 1794 and garrisoned with American troops. A second post, Cantonment Wilkinson-Ville, designed to thwart Spanish plots among the settlers along the frontier, was established on the Ohio in 1797, eighteen miles upstream from the site of Cairo.

Cantonment Wilkinson-Ville lost military importance after the Louisiana Purchase (1803) and its garrison was removed in 1805. The use of its buildings was granted to settlers. The subsequent fate of the post is obscure. A tradition has it, perhaps romantically, that Indians expelled the settlers and burned the fort. Whatever its end, John Rector, a U. S. surveyor, inspected the site of the post in 1807 and reported nothing more than "a field overgrown with briers."

Fort Massiac was maintained as a port of entry until 1812. Its records reveal that keelboatmen were moving tons of lard, bacon, flour, hemp, nails, guns, and whisky down the Ohio River. In their wake came a ragged fleet of arks and flatboats bearing pioneers who were to push the frontier toward the Rocky Mountains.

Township Seventeen, comprising the site of Cairo, was surveyed for the Federal Government by Archie Henry in 1807. Two years later Enoch Swarthouse, a keelboatman, landed at the junction of the rivers and found a pole-hut "on stilts," a water-logged canoe, and several stakes which had been driven into the bank as mooring posts.

The *New Orleans*, first steamboat to descend the Ohio and Mississippi to New Orleans, churned past the site of Cairo in December 1811. The middle Mississippi Valley had been rocked by an earthquake but a short time before. John Audubon, the ornithologist, then exploring western Kentucky, related that "the ground rose and fell in successive furrows, like the ruffled waters of a lake." Great vents opened in the earth, columns of subterranean muck spouted into the air, and the Mississippi, dammed by a downstream upheaval, is reported to have reversed its course for several hours.

Nearing the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi, the crew of the *New Orleans* saw Indians in canoes among the trees on land that had been flooded by the Mississippi. The earthquake and the arrival of the *New Orleans* were linked in the savage mind as related events. For years thereafter the Indians along the middle stretches of the Mississippi are said to have been in mortal fear of the big-smoke-canoes.

The *Comet*, *Vesuvius*, and *Enterprise* essayed the voyage from the upper Ohio to New Orleans and return, but each was unsuccessful. It remained for Capt. Henry W. Shreve, inventor of the cam cut-off and builder of the first double-deck steamboat, to demonstrate that the western rivers could be navigated. Captain Shreve's *Washington* left Louisville, Ky., on March 12, 1817, journeyed to New Orleans, shipped a full cargo and returned to Louisville within twenty-five days. This event was acclaimed by frontiersmen as second only to Gen. Andrew Jackson's victory at New Orleans in 1815.

The voyage of the *Washington* convinced the farsighted that the Ohio and Mississippi were to be main avenues of trade and immigration. The peninsula at the junction of the rivers became a desirable investment and within four months after Shreve's double-decker passed that way, the site of

Cairo was purchased. William and Thompson Bird entered 318 acres of what is now the south part of Cairo on the 26th and 28th of July 1817. On the same dates John Gleaves Comegys, a merchant of Baltimore and St. Louis, entered 1,800 acres.

William and Thompson Bird planned no settlement other than a spontaneous outgrowth of shops and dwellings occasioned by the gradual development of the Midwest. Comegys, however, promptly obtained an act, passed by the Territorial Legislature on January 9, 1818, incorporating the City and Bank of Cairo. The bill provided that a city be platted; that a third of the money derived from the sale of lots be used to construct levees; and that the remaining funds be invested in the Cairo Bank. The city was named Cairo because of the supposed similarity of its site to the land at the Nile delta.

Among the nine incorporators named with Comegys was Shadrach Bond, first Governor of Illinois.

Comegys is said to have prepared to visit Holland, there to hire dike builders to enclose the city site with levees. He died, however, in 1818 or '19 and with him perished the proposed city and bank. The other incorporators lost interest in the venture and allowed the partly purchased 1,800 acres to revert to the Federal Government.

Thus, in the same year that Illinois became a state, the first city of Cairo was stillborn.





Founded and Foundered

THE Birds made no effort to use their land at the junction of the rivers until the spring of 1828. In that year, perhaps bestirred by the steady increase of river traffic, they crossed the Mississippi from their plantation in Missouri and, aided by their slaves, built two frame houses, one a tavern and the other a store.

Alexander Phillip Maximilian, Prince of Wied-Neuwied, journeying downstream on a steamboat from Pittsburg, stopped at the Birds' settlement on March 20, 1832, and afterwards noted: "The tongue of land . . . which separates the two rivers, was, like the whole of the country, covered with rich woods, which were partly cleared, and a few houses erected, with an inn and store, and the dwelling of a planter, where we took in wood. In this store we saw, among heaps of skins, that of a black bear, lately killed. . . . The settlement at which we were now, had no other name than Mouth of the Ohio."

The Prince saw but "an inn and store, and the dwelling of a planter" at "Mouth of the Ohio," but others looked there and envisaged a great inland port, its wharves lined with sea-going ships and its "rich woods" obliterated by broad streets and bright houses. Judge Sidney Breese, one of the latter, revived John Comegys' plan to establish a city at the junction of the rivers, and enlarged it to include construction of a railroad between the proposed city and the proposed Illinois and Michigan Canal. The railroad would at once assure the growth of the city and transform the sparsely settled interior of Illinois into an opulent farming region with outlets on the great lakes of the north and the broad rivers of the south.

This ambitious project was confided to Anthony Olney, Alexander M. Jenkins, Thomas Swanwick, Miles A. Gilbert, and David J. Baker, who pooled resources with Breese and, in the late summer of 1835, bought all of the present site of Cairo with the exception of the Birds' property. Although Judge Breese's group was composed of astute men, it lacked the empire-builder necessary to maneuver the scheme through intervening labyrinths of finance and politics. Such a man appeared, however, in the person of Darius Blake Holbrook, a swashbuckling promoter whom contemporaries described as "a shrewd Boston Yankee."

Holbrook met Judge Breese at Vandalia and instantly impressed the jurist with his glowing conception of an Illinois that would some day be studded with proud cities and inhabited by thousands of prosperous merchants, farmers, and mechanics. "I unfolded my plans to him," Judge Breese afterwards related in a letter to Stephen A. Douglas, "... and being a man of great energy, he proposed the formation of a company to construct the road and build the city." Thus when the State Legislature incorporated the Central Railroad on January 16, 1836, the name of Darius B. Holbrook appeared as treasurer of the company, along with those of John Reynolds, Sidney Breese, Pierre Menard, and some fifty-five other incorporators who comprised the commercial and political leaders of Illinois.

Holbrook and Jenkins journeyed to Washington, D. C., shortly after the Central Railroad was organized, and presented a memorial to Congress requesting Government aid to build the road. A congressional committee approved the memorial, and a bill containing its features was introduced in the House. But the measure, and, indeed, the Central Railroad Company, was shortly superseded by an act of the Illinois Legislature.

The States, afflicted with a kind of national growing-pains, were then frantically building and projecting roads, bridges, and canals. Responding to the times, the Illinois Legislature passed an Act for a General System of Internal Improvements on February 27, 1837. The bill provided for an appropriation of ten million dollars to deepen rivers, build turnpikes,

and construct 1,200 miles of railroad. The key structure of the system was to be a \$3,500,000 railroad through central Illinois between Galena, then chief city of the State, and the mouth of the Ohio. The incorporators of the Central Railroad Company promptly released their charter to the legislature.

Two days after the passage of the Act for a General System of Internal Improvements, the State Legislature incorporated the Cairo City and Canal Company, with Darius B. Holbrook as president. The company was authorized to buy and sell land in Alexander County, to engage in industry and commerce, and, in short, to revive the privileges that had been granted to the incorporators of the Cairo City and Bank Company.

Holbrook journeyed to London, England, the following summer and began negotiations with John Wright & Company to finance the Cairo City and Canal Company bonds. The United States was then on the brink of a panic caused by the worthless issues of "wildcat" banks, unrestrained land speculation, and grandiose internal improvements. The members of John Wright & Company, therefore, considered Holbrook's proposition with deliberate caution. They employed William Strickland and Richard C. Taylor, engineers of Philadelphia, to examine the site where Holbrook proposed to build a city.

Strickland and Taylor's report, dated December 13, 1838, related that "the whole peninsula is covered with a growth of forest trees many of which are 3 to 8 feet in diameter: The cottonwood, sycamore, mulberry, maple and boxwood, abound over the surface . . . The railroad now constructing by the State of Illinois is already at this point; the route is cleared of the timber and the depot is laid out on the Ohio river front. . . ." In estimating the potential value of the site, Strickland and Taylor ended their report with "There is not in any quarter of the globe a situation so commanding and replete with every kind of produce and material to promote the prosperity of the merchant, the skill of the mechanic, and the growth of a great city."

The directors of John Wright & Company, thus assured of a choice site, accepted the bonds of the Cairo City and Canal Company, and immediately launched an intensive advertising campaign. Florid lithographs portraying a metropolis at the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi appeared in the pubs, halls, and squares of London. Pounds and shillings flowed into the coffers of John Wright & Company, and thence to Darius B. Holbrook.

Up to this time the work of building Cairo had been confined to the conference rooms of brokers and politicians, but now that capital was forthcoming Holbrook turned his attention to the material phases of the task. Scores of workmen were imported to the city site and a V-shaped levee was built along the Ohio and Mississippi to the point where they united.

Within the levee arose an iron works, a planing mill, two sawmills, two brickyards, and twenty cottages. A dry dock was built, along with a shipyard, and the foundations were laid for the Great London Warehouse, a building designed "to eclipse, in point of size, elegance, and general finish, the monster warehouse of like name in the city of London."

A large frame house was built at the tip of the peninsula for Holbrook's use, and, nearby, a spacious hotel was erected to accommodate incoming settlers. The Bank of Cairo, chartered by the Territorial Legislature, was revived by an act of the State Legislature on March 2, 1839, and re-established at Kaskaskia. Its notes circulated freely throughout Illinois.

The population of Cairo mounted to one thousand within a year. Holbrook, perhaps intent on establishing a tenant city controlled by a feudalistic Cairo City and Canal Company, was the virtual dictator of the village. Moses B. Harrell, a contemporary citizen, afterwards noted with considerable anger that "even personal liberty and freedom of thought were brought in direct antagonism to this singular undertaking. . . . At no price, in no shape or form, could a resident of this city . . . become a freeholder. He could not purchase, he could not lease . . . a single foot of ground within the proposed city . . . he lived in it only during the pleasure of this 'Lord of the manor'"

The precise status Holbrook intended for Cairo remains unknown; in 1840 his plans came to naught. In that year the State of Illinois, nearing bankruptcy because of extravagant internal improvements, repealed the act of February 27, 1837, and stopped work on the Central Railroad. The Cairo City and Canal Company survived this blow only to receive a fatal thrust on November 23, 1840, when John Wright & Company, holding millions in bonds made worthless by the Panic of 1837, failed in London.

A rumor that the bankrupt English firm controlled the Cairo Bank sent the value of its notes plummeting and by December 1840 they were worthless at St. Louis and Chicago. The tottering Cairo City and Canal Company, its main props withdrawn in a single year, tumbled into the financial abyss.

The inhabitants of Holbrook's town were panic-stricken. Many bundled their possessions together and boarded the first steamboat to appear; others, without funds except the notes of the Cairo bank, lingered in the desperate hope that complete collapse would be averted. The ironworks and shipyard continued to operate and in the late autumn of 1841 the steamboat *Tennessee Valley* was launched on the Ohio River. The vessel, of 495 tons displacement and 204 feet long, had been built from stem to stern by Cairo workmen using Cairo materials.

The launching of the *Tennessee Valley* was the anticlimax of Holbrook's Cairo. All industry ceased in the following months and the population dwindled. Shops were abandoned and gardens went to weeds. Creditors came with writs of execution and carried off whatever they could move. In the winter of 1842 a flood entered the incomplete levee, inundating the village.

Charles Dickens, en route to St. Louis, Mo., by steamboat, stopped at prostrate Cairo on April 9, 1842. Several historians have declared, without sufficient evidence, that Dickens had lost money in the failure of John Wright & Company. He, at any event, looked on Cairo with a jaundiced eye and later described it in *American Notes* as "a breeding place of fever, ague, and death; vaunted in England as a mine of Golden Hope, and speculated in, on the faith of monstrous

representations, to many people's ruin. A dismal swamp in which the half-built houses rot away; cleared here and there for the space of a few yards; and teeming then, with rank unwholesome vegetation, in whose baleful shade the wretched wanderers who come hither, droop and die, and lay their bones. . . ."

That Dickens was hyper-captious, that he deliberately smeared the settlement with his blackest brush, is indicated by his further description of the Mississippi at Cairo as "a slimy monster hideous to behold. . . . An enormous ditch, sometimes two or three miles wide, running liquid mud, six miles an hour. . . ."

So ended Holbrook's Cairo: execrated by Dickens, a man who commanded an audience of a million English-speaking people.

Cairo had risen and declined in less than three years.





Houseboat and Wharfboat

FIFTY or so inhabitants who conducted taverns and boat stores lived on at Cairo. Many of the steamboats bound up and down the Ohio and the Mississippi stopped at the junction of the rivers to replenish their supplies and take on passengers transferring from other boats. Thus the residents of the abandoned village thrived. There were no rents or taxes to pay and the stern Holbrook had departed. The populace, according to one of their number, M. B. Harrell, "enjoyed themselves to a degree beyond any other people."

Miles A. Gilbert, agent of the Cairo City and Canal Company, arrived at Cairo in the spring of 1843 and for several years thereafter unobtrusively guided the affairs of the settlement. At his direction the levees on the Ohio and Mississippi sides were joined by a third levee, thereby enclosing the village with an impregnable triangular embankment. In the following year when the Mississippi rose to heights never since equaled, Cairo remained secure although the country bordering the river between St. Louis and New Orleans was inundated.

Darius B. Holbrook, meanwhile, was not idle. On March 6, 1843, he succeeded in incorporating the directors of the Cairo City and Canal Company as directors of the Great Western Railway Company. This company, known generally as Holbrook's Company, was authorized to build the Central Railroad between Cairo and the Illinois and Michigan Canal.

The directors of the new company made an earnest effort to fulfill their plans. Parts of the unfinished grades

and surveys made by the State under the Act for a General System of Internal Improvements were completed, but sufficient capital could not be obtained and the attempt was shortly renounced. With the consent of Holbrook and the other incorporators, the charter of the Great Western Railway Company was repealed on March 3, 1845.

The failure of the Great Western Railway Company to attract investors made plain to Holbrook that his talents had become a handicap to the further development of Cairo and the Central Railroad. At his direction the Cairo City and Canal Company was reorganized in the autumn of 1846 as the Cairo City Property Trust. Of the 35,000 shares of stock issued by the new company, one-half were reserved for the Illinois Exporting Company, a vague enterprise that had been incorporated in January 1836, with Holbrook as president.

Holbrook thereafter lobbied in Boston, Philadelphia, New York, and Washington, D. C., to obtain a land grant for the Central Railroad. The Committee on Public Lands reported such a bill favorably on March 3, 1848. The measure was later passed by the Senate, but rejected by the House.

The population of Cairo now numbered slightly more than a hundred. Cast off to go its own way, the settlement had sent out roots that promised permanent growth. Addison H. Sanders, confident that the Central Railroad would be built and that Cairo would consequently boom, established the *Cairo Delta* in April 1848. In the same year a Mrs. Peplow started a private school, which was short-lived, and a person described as "a cadaverous bacon-colored old curmudgeon named Winchester," tried unsuccessfully to establish a singing-school.

Steamboat arrivals at Cairo for April, May, and June of 1848 totaled 847. Three wharfboats, the *Cairo*, *Louisiana*, and *Ellen Kirkman*, did a lively business at the Ohio Levee. These large engineless craft, required for the storage and transfer of freight because of the sharp slope of the levee, served as hotels, grocery stores, and warehouses. They offered, as advertised by the proprietor of the *Louisiana*,

“meats and ice . . . at a moment’s notice. The cabin will be kept in a steamboat running order for the accommodation of passengers stopping at the City of Cairo, or for changing boats. The table shall be supplied with the best the market affords.”

Thousands of emigrants were moving past Cairo to the western frontier. “Not a boat scarcely but brings its crowd of strangers,” the *Delta* noted in November 1848, “who seem to defy sand bars, laugh at snags, and forget the boilers beneath them. . . A world is moving on before us like the silently flowing waters which here mingle.”

In the first week of February 1849, the inhabitants learned that Gen. Zachary Taylor, hero of the Mexican War and president-elect, was bound up the Mississippi on the *Tennessee* en route to his inauguration. The village cannon was loaded and preparations were made to give “Old Zack” a vigorous reception. The welcoming committee waited all day February 5th and until 3 a. m. on February 6th before the *Tennessee* arrived. “It was not expected he would get up at that hour,” the *Delta* later remarked, “but that he might wake up and know he was somewhere we gave him three rounds as the boat left the wharf.”

When Congress convened in 1849 it was evident that the group led by Senator Stephen A. Douglas had accumulated sufficient strength to obtain the land grant for a railroad through central Illinois. Passage of a generous bill seemed certain and the wily Holbrook promptly re-incorporated the Great Western Railway Company on February 10, 1849, obtaining from a tractable legislature the right to use whatever lands the Federal Government might grant. This clause dismayed Douglas and checked the further progress of his bill.

Cairo, meanwhile, gave evidence of a dawning civic consciousness. At an Anti-Rogue meeting held on February 2, 1849, “to devise means to get rid of certain characters,” a motion was passed to petition the State Legislature for permission to build a jail. The settlement was at the mercy of crap-shooters, poker-sharps, and “such as rob tool chests,

cook houses, and fruit baskets," who were regularly "beached" at the junction of the rivers by steamboatmen.

The petition for a jail languished and the citizens were sometimes compelled to maintain order in their own way. "A gent in butternut," the Cairo *Delta* related on September 6, 1849, "was escorted back to the scene of his operations and after having his chops slapped and promising to swim the Mississippi and leave Cairo with an exalted opinion of its people, was permitted to go his way."

Senator Douglas took the stump in October 1849, and denounced the "Holbrook Charter" in speeches at Chicago and before the Illinois Legislature. Holbrook is said to have been convinced by a personal appeal of Douglas that the land grant to Illinois was in danger of being permanently lost. He, at any event, yielded. On December 24, 1849, the Great Western Railway Company surrendered its charter to the State.

A bill granting Illinois 2,500,000 acres was signed by President Fillmore on September 20, 1850.

When the State Legislature assembled in January 1851, Holbrook's attempts to incorporate a railroad company to use the land grant were opposed by a group of Boston capitalists led by David A. Neal and George Griswold. At the first test of strength Judge Sidney Breese, Holbrook's candidate, was elected Speaker of the House. This advantage was offset, however, by the adroit methods Neal and Griswold subsequently used to gain the support of additional legislators. Holbrook, informed that his foes might capture the deciding votes by promising to terminate the railroad at Metropolis instead of Cairo, abandoned his weakening position and made a hasty, though profitable, truce.

The peace terms provided that the Neal-Griswold group was to incorporate a company without further resistance; that Holbrook was to receive one thousand shares of stock in the new company; and that the company would establish its southern terminal at Cairo, making improvements there to the advantage of the Cairo City Property Trust.

The Illinois Central Railroad Company was incorporated by the State Legislature on February 10, 1851.

The growth of Cairo was immediately stimulated. Samuel Staats Taylor, Trustee of the Cairo City Property Trust, arrived in April 1851, but, despite the demands of merchants, settlers, and land speculators, refused to sell a single lot.

The incoming population, denied the right to buy land and unable to get space in the few buildings ashore, lived in houseboats, wharfboats, and the *Ivanhoe Boarding Boat*, whose proprietor declared in the *Cairo Sun* that "Epicures can do no better than to stop here." Merchants, likewise, took to the water, and craft moored to the Ohio levee during 1851 contained a barber shop, a bakery, a butcher shop, and the studio of a "Daguerrean Artist" who promised "Likenesses in clear or cloudy weather." The term "floating population" had literal meaning in the settlement for several years.

The houses in the clearing by the levee were filled to the very roof tops. "The one story establishment of Shanessy & Simmons, 20 by 50 feet," the *Cairo Sun* noted on May 1, 1851, "is now occupied by a Telegraph Office, a drug store, a Coffee House, a Notary Public's office, a magistrate's office, a lawyer's office and . . . by the *Cairo Sun*. To finish the enumeration there are in the basement of the house some 350 tons of ice."

The telegraph was the pride and wonder of the settlement. A backwoodsman from Kentucky, related the *Cairo Sun*, strolled into the telegraph office and casually asked the time required to send a message to Dubuque, Iowa. When informed by the clerk that his communication could be transmitted in three minutes the grizzled Kentuckian roared: "Now I'll tell you squire what it is. I'm thirty-five years old—have been to Mexico and seen the 'elephant'—have traveled over thirteen states, fit, whipped, and sucked the blood of many a man, and if I don't maul you right here, why, you'll be the first critter that ever rode me, that's all."

The frightened clerk took him at his word and fled.

When the extremes of summer and winter were reached, Cairo became the head of navigation on the Ohio and Missis-

sippi. The pilots of steamers venturing upstream from the mouth of the Ohio during the dog-days risked running aground; while to enter the upper stretches of the rivers in winter was to hazard smashing the paddle-wheel on blocks of ice. Thus when summer torpor or winter cold silenced other settlements, the stores and taverns of Cairo hummed with trade. The value of the freight aboard steamboats detained by ice at Cairo during the winter of 1854, was set at three million dollars.

The spiritual needs of the settlement were supplied by the Reverend Mr. Armstrong of the Methodist Church; the Reverend Mr. Griswold of the Episcopal Church; the Reverend Father McCabe of the Roman Catholic Church; and the Reverend Mr. Olmsted of the Presbyterian Church. Services were held in hotels, steamboats, wharfboats, and, in short, wherever space could be had.

"I preach alternately at Cairo and Caledonia," the Reverend Mr. Olmsted reported in the *Home Missionary* of December 1852. "At the former place I preach in the dining room of the hotel. The room is large and convenient, but peculiarly unsuited to this purpose. We have to snatch the hours between meals, morning and afternoon, for our services. Tables, chairs, etc., have all to be shifted for each occasion. The citizens think of fitting up a house, to supply the one burned last winter. More than one-half the population is afloat, in all manner of craft, from the large dismantled steamboat (there are four of them), to the 'family boat, not near as large as a Pennsylvania wagon bed. . . ."

The Cairo City Property Trust opened the sale of Cairo lots in December 1853. This date may be said to mark the beginning of contemporary Cairo.





Piston and Paddle-Wheel

ACCORDING to the agreement made between Holbrook and the Neal-Griswold group, the Illinois Central Railroad Company was to terminate the road at Cairo and construct certain levees around the city. To fulfill the latter part of this obligation the railroad company unfortunately hired a contractor named Dutcher who, with several minor officials of the company, organized a clique, purchased land at Mound City and made plans to terminate the railroad there.

Dutcher arrived with six hundred workmen in 1854 and began building a new levee on the Mississippi side of Cairo. Large gaps were made in the old levee, supposedly to supply earth for the new embankment, which, contrary to reason, was built in isolated sections rather than as a continuous unit. The land at the base of the new levee was not properly prepared by ploughing or grubbing; sand, stumps, and logs were incorporated in the embankment. These erratic methods aroused the suspicions of Samuel Staats Taylor, Trustee of the Cairo City Property Trust.

The Mississippi began to rise rapidly and Taylor urged Dutcher to fill the gaps in the new levee with all possible speed. Dutcher made no effort to hasten the work, although the river swelled towards flood stage. Taylor, convinced that the contractor's delay was deliberate, hired three hundred men to work on the levee at nights. The gaps were filled without an hour to spare. Dutcher retreated before his treachery became generally known.

By November 1854, the Illinois Central Railroad had been constructed 117 miles north of Cairo to Sandoval where

it intersected the east-west line of the Ohio and Mississippi Railroad, establishing rail connections with East St. Louis. The first train to travel this route left Cairo on November 22nd with two hundred passengers aboard. The trip to East St. Louis required twelve hours, although, as the *St. Louis Republican* commented, "the grade is such that almost any speed can be attained . . . enough to satisfy the fastest, even in this fast age."

"You step aboard the train here," the *Cairo Times* related of the new service, "and are drawn at the rate of 40 miles an hour to Sandoval, in comfortable and elegant cars. . . . In the meantime you stop at Centralia where, for four bits you get a sumptuous and elegant dinner." The enthusiasm of the *Times* was not shared by planters in Missouri and Kentucky who saw in the railroad a new avenue of escape for runaway slaves. In this connection the *Times* declared, "the impression has gone abroad that there is to be an underground railroad from this place . . . We assure our friends abroad that such fears are entirely without foundation. There are no abolitionists here—though this is a free state—the climate doesn't agree with them."

More than eight hundred lots were sold at Cairo during 1854. Steamboat arrivals for that year, according to the *Times*, totaled 3,798, in comparison with 3,006 for St. Louis. It was confidently predicted that Cairo would be "the largest interior city on this continent," and John A. Logan, speaking before the Illinois Legislature, eloquently pictured vessels from the West Indies unloading sugar and spices at the Cairo wharves.

An Illinois Central train made the first run over the completed road between Cairo and Chicago on January 8, 1855. Before the month elapsed the *Times* reported of the new railroad that "more freight is offered than it is prepared to carry on account of a lack of cars and engines."

Shortly after the Chicago-Cairo axis was effected, the citizens of the southern community established a local government. A court of common pleas was obtained by a legislative act of February 8, 1855. On March 1st, following, the populace met at the railroad depot and voted unani-

mously to incorporate Cairo as a town. Five days later M. B. Harrell, B. Shannessy, B. Stapleton, L. W. Young, and Samuel Staats Taylor were elected Town Trustees.

The Town Trustees promptly sought to correct the abuses that the unorganized populace had endured. An ordinance enacted on April 18, 1855, prohibited steamboatmen "from landing within the limits of the town, without a permit, any person sick of any contagious, infectious, or epidemic disease" under penalty of a five-hundred-dollar fine.

In the years prior to 1855 scores of dying passengers had been carried from steamboats and deserted on the Cairo Levee. "Boats plying upon the western waters," said a resident of Cairo in the *Chicago Daily Democratic Press*, February 20, 1854, "because this is a convenient place, have been in the habit of *palming* off upon us, with impunity, all the sick, dead and dying they could possibly be rid of, after crowding their decks with emigrants at New Orleans, transferring them directly from the ship in every imaginable state of filth and disease. . . ."

Though the threat of epidemics introduced by steamboat passengers was thus regulated, Cairo continued to suffer an almost equally malignant kind of steamboat exile. "There has been quite a scarcity of gamblers in town lately," the *Times & Delta* noted on January 9, 1856, "but thieves have been plentiful. The rivers being frozen they cannot get further and as a natural consequence stop here. Look out, fellows; the first offense, and—well, we wouldn't want to be in your boots for the whole of Paducah."

The itinerant scoundrels ignored the warning of the *Times & Delta* and arrogantly robbed and swindled during the following fortnight. The Town Trustees ominously voted seven hundred dollars on January 30, 1856, to build a jail. Outrages continued, however, throughout the succeeding month. In final desperation the townspeople assembled on February 24th and organized two groups of twenty-four men each, to patrol the community at night. Several days later the *Times & Delta* reported with evident satisfaction that "the town has been as meek as a mouse and quiet as a claret-colored cat." The voluntary corps ceased their sur-

veillance on February 26th, when the citizens contributed two hundred dollars to hire five policemen until the sum was exhausted. A police court was established on the following April 16th.

Cairo thrived throughout 1856. More than four hundred houses were built, together with a combination flour mill, cooper shop, and boardinghouse that cost \$25,000. Bricklayers struck, successfully, for three dollars a day. The menu of a banquet given that year included boiled turkey, squirrel pie, roast pigeon, boiled quail, roast wild duck, and saddle of venison. Among the showboats that stopped at the Ohio levee was the *Steamer Banjo* with Ned Davis' Minstrels; the *Floating Palace* with a "live white Polar Bear" and "Madame Olinza, the beautiful and daring Polish refugee who performs on a tightrope"; and Burhop's *Great Floating Hindoo Pagoda*, "containing his celebrated exhibition of Chemical Dioramas and Chinese Pyric Fire." The Great American Circus arrived in August, billing a "Fancy dance by the beautiful and accomplished Danseuse Mlle. Victoria Smith." Mr. C. L. Curtis, "The Great Pedestrian," also visited Cairo and walked a sixteen-foot plank continuously for thirty-six hours; he concluded his performance by dancing an Irish Jig.

Despite the apparently light-hearted times brought by prosperity, the year 1856 was darkened by the shadow of the coming War between the States. Commenting on the internecine struggle then raging between proslavery and free-soil groups in the territory of Kansas, the *Times & Delta* prophetically observed on August 27, 1856, that "the only result which will follow . . . is a civil war; a war in which State after State will become involved, until the northern and southern portions of this great confederacy shall stand arrayed against each other in deadly hostility, thirsting for blood. God forbid that such be the case."

Cairo was incorporated as a city by a special legislative act on February 11, 1857. The first election of city officers was held the following March 7th. Samuel Staats Taylor was elected mayor by a vote of 210 to 159. Patrick Burke, Martin Egan, Roger Finn, Timothy Gaffney, John Howley,

Cornelius Manley, Peter Neff, C. M. Osterloh, William Standing, Peter Stapleton, C. A. Whaley, and Henry Whitecamp were elected aldermen. The City Council held its first meeting on March 9, 1857. The population of the city was 1,756.

Darius B. Holbrook, following his compromise with the Neal-Griswold group, had left Illinois and become associated with Cyrus W. Field in laying the first Atlantic Cable. On January 22, 1858, Holbrook died at New York City. As though this event presaged misfortune, Cairo suffered adversity in the following months.

The year began well. Almost two thousand railroad tickets were sold at Cairo during January; north-bound freight shipments received the same month included 500 boxes of oranges, 627 sacks of salt, 891 sacks of coffee, 1,185 pounds of molasses, and 1,813 hogsheads of sugar. In spring the Illinois Central Railroad began operating a new fleet of nine steamboats between New Orleans and Cairo. An "ice-cream saloon" was opened, a bank was established, a steam sawmill was built, and, in short, the city prospered.

Disaster came on June 14th when a section of the levee built by Dutcher in 1854, crumbled before the rising Mississippi. The water entered slowly, enabling the townspeople to retreat to the Ohio Levee without loss of life. Here they camped until the river receded.

Newspaper publishers of rival communities immediately made the flood the subject of editorials designed to sap the further growth of Cairo. The crossroads press blatantly proclaimed that Cairo was a quagmire inhabited by a web-foot people who were regularly ravaged by virulent epidemics. A song reprinted widely during this period went:

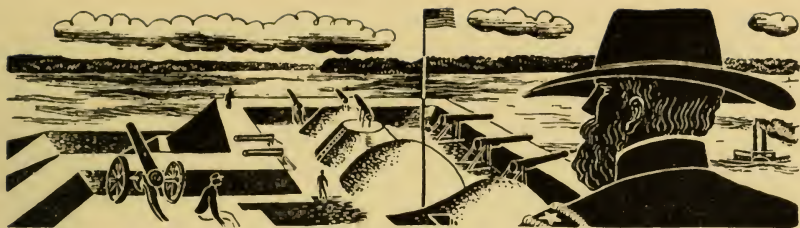
Oh, the derndest boat I ever saw,
It was a stern-wheel boat;
The clerk he had no shoes,
And the captain had no coat.
I hear my true-love weep,
I hear my true-love sigh—
Way down in Ca-i-ro
This nigger's gwine to die.

The city that had arisen despite the blasts of Charles Dickens was not felled by backwoods scriveners. The north-south commerce, sedulously cultivated since the completion of the Illinois Central Railroad, reached significant proportions in the following year. Great quantities of northern pork, beef, and whisky, together with 27,000 barrels of flour and more than 350,000 bushels of wheat were sent to Cairo for shipment to the South. Southern products received at Cairo during 1859 included 6,902 barrels of molasses, 2,269 barrels and 15,152 hogsheads of sugar, and more than 6,000,000 pounds of wool and cotton.

Among the flatboats that had drifted past the tavern and grocery store which the Birds' slaves constructed on the site of Cairo in 1828, was one steered by a lanky field-hand from Kentucky. Thirty-two years later the field-hand, then grown grave and deathlessly eloquent, became a candidate for the Presidency of the United States.

On November 6, 1860, the citizens of Cairo cast 347 votes for Stephen A. Douglas and 76 for Abraham Lincoln.





Cannon and Gunboat

WAR between the States found the inhabitants of Cairo torn by forces that had almost equal claims to their allegiance. Although in a free State, the city was virtually a part of the South and many of its people were Southerners. The populace, on the whole, disliked abolitionism and abhorred disunion. They preferred the middle way as formulated by Stephen A. Douglas. When it became apparent, however, that the North had not invited a mere war of aggression, Cairo rallied to its support and at the first call for troops sent more men than could be enrolled.

Military strategists of the North and South were quick to recognize that Cairo was the key position of the Mississippi Valley. One week after the attack on Fort Sumter (April 12, 1861), Simon Cameron, Secretary of War, telegraphed Governor Yates of Illinois "to send a Brigadier General with four regiments at or near Grand Cairo." A force of 595 men, led by General Swift, left Chicago within forty-eight hours and arrived at Cairo on April 23rd. Seven Springfield companies increased General Swift's command on the following day. Confederate soldiers, marching to seize Cairo, halted twenty miles away at Columbus, Ky.

James B. Eads, the renowned engineer, advised the Secretary of the Navy, on April 29, 1861, "to establish at Cairo, as the base of operations, a strong force with such batteries on shore and afloat as will effectually control the passage of vessels bound up or down the Mississippi and Ohio rivers." The effect of this blockade on the South, Eads concluded, "would be most disastrous, as it would . . . close the main artery through which flows her food."

Eads' plan was referred to the War Department and promptly adopted. The land at the southern tip of Cairo was filled in to the height of the converging Ohio and Mississippi Levees to form an earthen platform which was fortified with cannon. This position was named Camp Defiance. By the middle of May 1861, five thousand troops had been concentrated there under the command of Brig. Gen. B. M. Prentiss. The *Tyler*, *Lexington*, and *Conestoga*, three packet steamers that had been hastily converted into gunboats, arrived at Cairo in August 1861.

The blockade stopped the commerce on which Cairo depended for existence. By the summer of 1861 the Ohio Levee was lined with idle packets and the lodging-houses crowded with unemployed steamboatmen. The depression was quickly curbed when men and money began to pour into Camp Defiance. Camp-followers ranging from profiteers to tent-show operators arrived by scores. Rows of jerry-built houses arose to accommodate the mounting population and before the year elapsed Cairo entered on a brisk boom.

Ulysses S. Grant, recently appointed commander of the district of southeastern Missouri, established his headquarters at Cairo in September 1861. In a letter to his sister, Mary, written a week after his arrival, he related, "I have taken possession of the Kentucky bank, opposite here, fortified it and placed four large pieces in position (Fort Holt). Have occupied Norfolk, Missouri, and taken possession of Paducah. My troops are so close to the enemy as to occasionally exchange shots with the pickets. . . . Yesterday there was skirmishing all day. . . ."

Grant left Cairo on November 6, 1861, with three thousand troops aboard five steamboats convoyed by two gunboats, and descended the Mississippi to Fort Belmont, opposite Columbus, Ky., where he attacked seven thousand Confederates. His raw troops, although outnumbered, dislodged the gray garrison but were in turn expelled by a deadly counter-attack. About 485 of Grant's men were reported killed, wounded, or missing, while 642 Confederates met a similar fate. A baby girl abandoned in the woods near the

fort was rescued by Grant's retreating troops and taken to Cairo. There she was baptized Belmont Lambert by the Reverend Father L. A. Lambert of St. Patrick's Church.

The Battle of Belmont seemed an outright defeat to Northern critics, but, as Grant maintained, the encounter was really a successful diversion. "The object of our expedition," he informed his father in a letter written two days after the battle, "was to prevent the enemy from sending a force into Missouri to cut off troops I had sent there. . . ."

Steady reinforcements increased the number of Grant's command to twenty thousand by the late winter of 1861. Shipyards at Mound City and St. Louis were meanwhile working day and night to supply gunboats for the Western Flotilla then being assembled at Cairo by Flag Officer Andrew H. Foote.

By the beginning of 1862 the Western Flotilla consisted of twelve gunboats—powerful vessels sheathed with iron plates two and one-half inches thick—of which the *Benton*, *St. Louis*, *Louisville*, *Carondelet*, and *Pittsburg* had been constructed under the supervision of James B. Eads. The gunboat *Cairo*, launched at Mound City in October 1861, and named by Flag Officer Foote, was used in wresting the rivers from the Confederates until July 1863, when it was destroyed by a submerged mine near Vicksburg, Miss.

In the first week of February 1862, Grant commandeered the idle steamboats at Cairo and transported seventeen thousand troops up the Tennessee against Fort Henry. The fort fell on February 6th under a terrific bombardment from the Federal gunboats.

Grant, unaware that orders were on the way advising him to intrench his troops within the captured fort and prepare for the Confederate counter-assault, advanced eleven miles and attacked Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River. After a hard battle the Confederate commander opened negotiations for the capitulation of the fort and Grant, with characteristic brusqueness, demanded "an unconditional and immediate surrender." The garrison yielded on February 16th. About fourteen thousand captured troops were taken

to Cairo to await incarceration in Northern prisons. U. S. Grant, "Unconditional Surrender" Grant, was promoted to the rank of major general.

Anthony Trollope, English man of letters, had meanwhile visited Cairo, and, following the precedent set by Dickens, seen no good there. "The houses are generally built at considerable intervals and rarely face each other," he later noted in *North America*. "No faces looked out at the windows . . . no form stood in the doorway. . . . A few only were moving about, and they moved in wretched carts, each drawn by two miserable floundering horses."

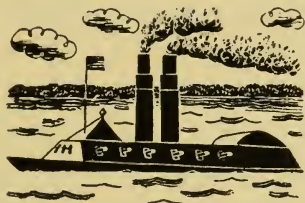
Trollope inspected thirty-eight mortar-boats, moored in the Ohio a mile north of Cairo, and deemed them very impractical. The "sheds of soldiers" at Camp Defiance he found "bad, comfortless, damp, and cold"; they did not, however, "stink like those of Benton barracks at St. Louis." The four gunboats that had been left to guard Cairo greatly impressed the English author. "They are well made and very powerfully armed, and will, probably," he concluded, "succeed in driving the secessionist armies away from the river banks."

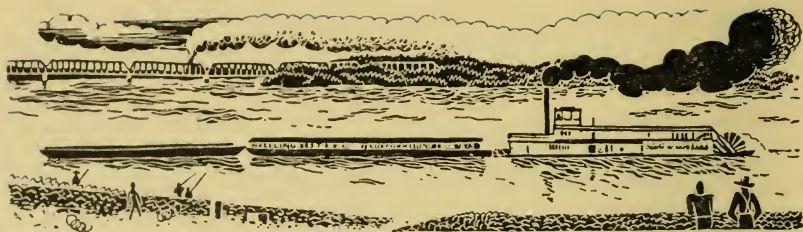
Grant's army journeyed a hundred miles up the Tennessee River to Pittsburg Landing, where on April 6-7 occurred the Battle of Shiloh. The Confederates retreated to Corinth, Miss., which they in turn evacuated before a Federal advance on May 30th. The Western Flotilla, battering its way down the Mississippi, arrived within range of Vicksburg by the summer of 1862.

Grant's troops subsequently moved on Vicksburg and, reinforced by corps under Maj. Gens. McClernand, Sherman, and McPherson, besieged the city on May 18, 1863. Northern guns pounded the stronghold for forty-seven days. At last, on July 4th, Confederate Gen. John C. Pemberton surrendered. About thirty thousand of the emaciated garrison were transported to Cairo and thence to Northern prisons. Five days after Vicksburg fell, Port Hudson, last Confederate intrenchment on the Mississippi, was occupied by Union troops. "The Father of Waters," commented President Lincoln, "goes again unvexed to the sea."

As the base of the enlarged and renamed Western Flotilla (Mississippi Squadron) and the concentration point for troops and supplies to the captured territory, Cairo experienced a period of rapid growth. The *Gazette* reported in September 1863 that “every house, cellar, and shed on the levee, from one extreme of the town to the other, is occupied as a place of business and every occupant . . . is doing well.”

But while the city bustled with wartime activity, its all-important north-south commerce languished and expired. The corn, wheat, beef, and pork of the Illinois interior, dammed at the south, was finding a new course to Chicago—a course from which it was never diverted.





“The Railroad Is But the Steamboat Running on Dry Land”

BY the end of the war Cairo, with a population estimated at 8,569, was the largest city in southern Illinois. Its thriving industries included a brass foundry, a steamboat factory, a steam engine plant, a vinegar factory, two boiler works, two planing mills, and two machine shops. Five newspapers, one in the German language, were published during 1865. Religion was represented by five white and five Negro churches.

The city suffered an outbreak of fires, generally believed to have been of incendiary origin, in the autumn and winter of 1865. Two business houses were destroyed on October 7th; four shops were gutted on October 11th; the entire block on Commercial Avenue between 3rd and 4th Streets was consumed on December 11th; nine buildings were lost two nights later; and three shops went up in flames on December 17th. Fortunately, well-trained volunteer fire companies were available to extinguish the mysterious conflagrations, or greater damage would have been done.

The volunteer fire companies, aside from their fire-fighting activities, contributed much to the social life of the city. The principal companies in 1865 were the Arabs and the Rough-and-Readies. The “Roughs” owned two fire-engines, *Ocean No. 1* and *The Deluge*. *Ocean No. 1* had been bought for eight hundred dollars at Nashville, Tenn., in 1863, and

transported to Cairo by steamboat. The Arabs were the proud possessors of the *Little Arab*, a hand machine, and a powerful steam engine, *Jack Winter*, valued at ten thousand dollars.

Both companies received small subsidies from the city government, but their main source of income was obtained by sponsoring fairs, picnics, and excursions. Friendly rivalry thrived and when an alarm was sounded the members of each corps made back-breaking efforts "to get first water." The Arabs were incorporated by the State Legislature on February 15, 1865, and the "Roughs" were incorporated on March 7, 1867.

Sewers were installed in a part of the business section during the summer of 1866. This fact may seem prosaic to-day but in the years when even Washington, D. C., was described as "a mud hole almost as bad as the Serbonian Bog," the acquisition of a municipal drainage system was a notable achievement.

The dirt streets of Middle Western communities, undrained, rutted by wagonwheels, became channels of mud whenever rain fell or snow thawed. Post-Civil War pedestrians in downtown Cairo, whatever the weather, shopped dryshod on elevated sidewalks. As described by a visitor to the city in 1867, the walks were "about five feet wide, with handrails along each side . . . supported underneath by upright wooden posts about three feet apart in parallel rows." At the intersections of busy streets the walks were built high enough to clear wagon tops.

The gunboats had forced the showboats to take quarters on dry land and but few, comparatively, returned to the rivers after 1865. Their place at Cairo was taken by the Athenaeum, a theatre-hall in which appeared the popular *Ten Nights in a Bar Room*, *Under the Gas Light*, *The Spectre Bridegroom*, *The Pearl of Savoy*, and *All that Glitters Is Not Gold*. Favorite tableaux of the period included *Nydia, the Blind Girl*, *Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep*, *Taking of the Veil*, and *The Handwriting on the Wall*.

The school system of Cairo was by 1868 superior to that of any other city of similar size in Illinois. A large frame

schoolhouse and two spacious brick structures were erected to accommodate the increasing number of pupils. In contrast with the average wage of \$42.50 paid elsewhere in Illinois, male executive teachers of Cairo received from \$100 to \$150 a month. Women teachers, in comparison with the State average of \$32.80, received between \$40 and \$60 per month.

The nomination of Grant and Seymour for the presidency carried the bitterness of the late war from deserted battlefields to crowded polling-booths. Grant, because of his endorsement by radical reconstructionists, was stoutly opposed at Cairo. A torchlight procession nearly a mile long was held on September 5, 1868, by admirers of Seymour. Transparencies held aloft proclaimed "Grant is the Bondholder's Candidate," and "Don't Insure with Grant; He has no Policy."

At the November election Grant received 336 Cairo votes and Seymour 792.

Steamboats, meanwhile, drawing strength from sections of the Southwest that had escaped the full force of war, churned the Mississippi with ante-bellum vigor. More than sixty thousand cattle were transported from Texas to Cairo during 1868. Steamboat arrivals for that year totaled 3,729.

Railroads also prospered. The locomotive, once a mere feeder for the steamboat, was inexorably reversing its status. Alarmed steamboatmen made desperate efforts to compete with the land-going upstart. Breakneck schedules were established and the midwestern rivers became race courses.

The *J. M. White* had, in 1844, made the run from New Orleans to Cairo in three days, six hours, and forty-four minutes. Nine years later the *A. L. Shotwell* traveled the same distance in three days, three hours, and forty minutes, a time unbettered for seventeen years. On June 30, 1870, however, the *Natchez* and the *Robert E. Lee* left New Orleans on their memorable race to St. Louis. Three days, one hour and one minute later the *Robert E. Lee*, bow down and funnels belching smoke, swept by Cairo where hundreds had gathered to see the race. It arrived at St. Louis six hours and thirty-three minutes ahead of the *Natchez*.

Inhabitants of Louisville and Cincinnati believed that the race was to end at Cairo. When correctly informed of the finish line, many wagers in those cities were disqualified, irrespective of the time of the *Robert E. Lee* at Cairo.

The single misfortune to befall Cairo in the remaining years of the nineteenth century came in the late summer of 1878. Yellow fever began a grim journey up the Mississippi that year, pausing horribly at Natchez, Vicksburg, and Memphis. As the plague spread north about 2,500 residents of Cairo fled.

In early September the fever reached the city. Doctors of that time had only empiric methods to combat the ailment; popular cures included such nostrums as "the juice of the powdered leaves of the Verbena, given in small doses three times a day and injections of the same every ten hours." Frost was the only sure remedy known and it, unfortunately, could not be manufactured.

"All the gold in the world would be of no value to Cairo as compared with a frost," the Cairo *Evening Sun* observed in the last week of September. The tense survivors anxiously searched the earth each morning for evidence of the white antidote. September dwindled into October and the rivers carried leaves, crimson and brown, past the quiet city. At last on October 12th, as announced by the *Evening Sun*, there came "Frost! Frost!! The Beautiful Frost!!!"

The epidemic abated rapidly, thereafter, and by October 29th most of the inhabitants away from Cairo had returned. Of those who had remained, forty-one were dead.

Though Cairo was tapped by seven railroads in the last quarter of the century, its river commerce continued to thrive. Great cargoes of lumber were transported to planing mills, furniture factories, and a cabinet works of the Singer Sewing Machine Company, which had been established in the city. Packets maintained regular service between Paducah, Memphis, and other ports, while transfer boats were required to carry railroad cars across the river between the Cairo terminals and those in Kentucky and Missouri. During 1889, the year in which the Illinois Central Bridge was opened, 250,-

000 cars were ferried at Cairo. An average of ten steamboat arrivals was recorded daily during 1890.

"Cairo is a brisk town now," Mark Twain said in *Life on the Mississippi*, "and is substantially built and has a city look about it. . . . However, it was already building with bricks when I had seen it last—which was when Colonel (now General) Grant was drilling his command there. Uncle Mumford says the libraries and Sunday-schools have done a good work in Cairo, as well as the brick-masons. Cairo has a heavy railroad and river trade, and her situation . . . is so advantageous that she cannot well help prospering."

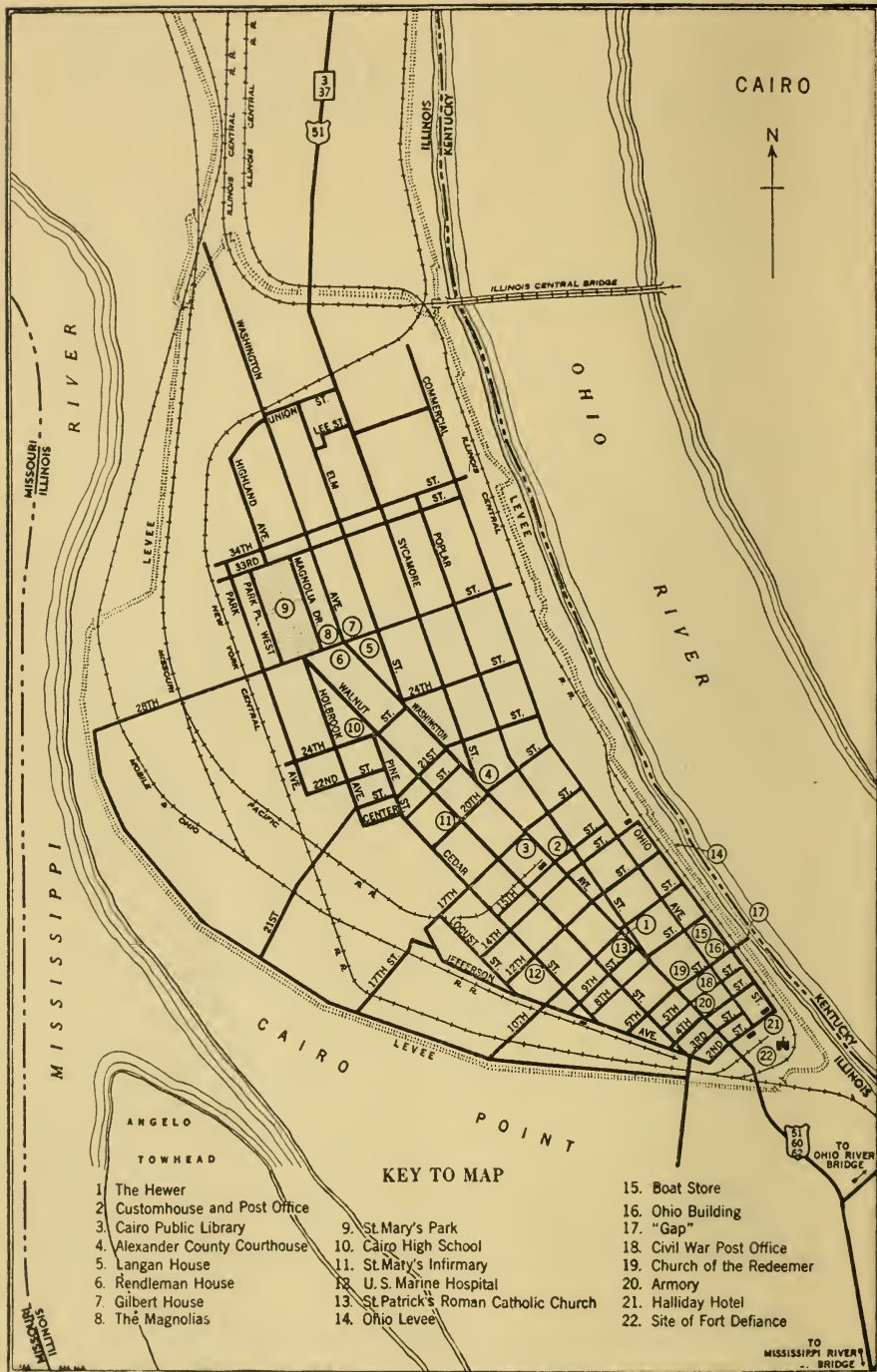
The death of Col. Samuel Staats Taylor at Cairo, May 14, 1896, marked the end of an era in the development of the city. Born in New Jersey in 1811, he was graduated by Rutgers College, and began practicing law in New York. For several years he was employed by the Bank of the United States; in 1846 he became associated with the Cairo City Property Trust. Arriving at Cairo in April 1851, he was elected first mayor, and, subsequently, witnessed the efforts of the settlement to obtain a place among the cities of Illinois. He had seen its first streets advance into the forests on the peninsula; he had seen its levee lined with the finest steamboats on the western waters. And now in his last years he had perceived the railroad, which once seemed a life-line, become a noose throttling the river commerce of Cairo.

The subsequent history of Cairo is a recital of streets graded, houses built, sidewalks laid, ordinances passed, and, in short, a log-book of utilitarian events generated by the progress of a people who had subdued a wild land and arrived at domesticated days. The rivers, too, were tamed with dams and levees, but, notably in recent years, the Ohio has gone on disastrous rampages. When in 1937 it rose to record heights, flooding Paducah, Louisville, Cincinnati, Shawneetown, and other communities, Cairo commanded the attention of the country as the one city on the lower river to escape inundation.

The struggle between rail and water was bitter and prolonged at Cairo. It cannot be said that the railroad won a

complete victory, for although the double-decked steamboats have disappeared, in their place are long steel barges pushed by stubby tugs whose mournful whistles awaken a thousand memories at the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi.







Tour of Cairo

IN a small wedge-shaped park between 9th and 10th Sts. on Washington Ave. is (1) **THE HEWER**, an heroic bronze nude by George Grey Barnard, which symbolizes the pioneer spirit. *The Hewer* was presented to Cairo in 1906 by Miss Mary H. Halliday and her family in memory of her father, William Parker Halliday, who died in 1889. Prior to its unveiling at Cairo the statue was exhibited at the St. Louis World's Fair. In 1910 Lorado Taft deemed *The Hewer* to be one of the two best nudes then in America.

North from The Hewer on Washington Ave.

(2) The **CUSTOMHOUSE AND POST OFFICE**, 15th and Washington Ave., is a three-story stone building of Romanesque architecture, its south entrance shaded by a huge magnolia. The site is said to have been selected by Stephen A. Douglas in 1857. The cornerstone was laid in 1869 and the structure was completed in 1872. It was designed by A. B. Mullett, supervising architect of the U. S. Treasury Department.

(3) The **CAIRO PUBLIC LIBRARY** (*open 9-6 weekdays*), 1609 Washington Ave., is a two-story structure of Queen Anne architecture. It was built in 1883 and presented to Cairo the following year by Mrs. A. B. Safford in memory of her husband. Mrs. Safford was, with twelve others, a charter member of the Cairo Women's Club and Library Association, incorporated February 7, 1877.

Shaded by magnolias on the library lawn is the **FIGHTING BOYS**, an original by Janet Scudder, presented to Cairo by Miss Mary H. Halliday. The group differs from Miss

Scudder's *Fighting Boys* fountain in the Art Institute of Chicago in that the figures of the latter are lead and nude, while the Cairo cherubs are bronze and garlanded.

A MUSEUM on the second floor of the library contains statuary, minerals, Indian artifacts, Civil War memorabilia, land and marine fossils, and a variety of antiques and curios. Not least important in the collection are complete files of Cairo newspapers issued from 1866 to date, with irregular files from 1848. The library contains 31,000 volumes and, largely through the efforts of Miss Effie A. Lansden, librarian, ranks first among the municipal libraries in lower southern Illinois.

(4) The ALEXANDER COUNTY COURTHOUSE, 20th and Washington Ave., with protruding gables and columned façade, is a southern adaptation of the classical style. The structure was designed by a local architect and built in 1865. Cairo succeeded Thebes as seat of Alexander County in 1859.

(5) LANGAN HOUSE (*private*), 2700 Washington Ave., is a massive brick residence surmounted by a huge lookout tower. General and Mrs. U. S. Grant were entertained here when they visited Cairo in 1880. A ginkgo tree flourishes on the lawn at the rear.

(6) RENDLEMAN HOUSE (*private*), 2723 Washington Ave., perhaps the most noteworthy residence in Cairo, is built of brick, painted white, and capped by a mansard roof.

(7) GILBERT HOUSE (*private*), 2800 Washington Ave., embodies the stodgy elegance of post-Civil War architecture. A pagoda-like lookout tower, long a Cairo landmark, was recently removed from the structure.

(8) THE MAGNOLIAS (*private*), NW. corner of 28th St. and Washington Ave., was built at the close of the Civil War and occupied by Col. Samuel Staats Taylor. Here the great and near-great who visited Cairo were hospitably received. In later years George Parsons, many times mayor of Cairo, resided at The Magnolias.

Left from Washington Ave. on 28th St.

(9) ST. MARY'S PARK, 28th and Holbrook Ave., has

been the recreational center of Cairo since 1872. Clumps of mistletoe are visible in the trees that tower above the walkways.

*Left from 28th St. on Holbrook Ave.; L. from
Holbrook Ave. on Walnut St.*

(10) The CAIRO HIGH SCHOOL, 2509 Walnut St., is a modern structure of buff brick. The CAIRO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL is immediately south.

(11) ST. MARY'S INFIRMARY, 2025 Washington Ave., is a three-story brick building, flanked by two-story wings. The central structure was built in 1892 and the additions were made in 1902. The institution was founded by Sisters of the Holy Cross who came to Cairo in Civil War years to nurse sick and injured soldiers.

Right from Walnut St. on 12th St.; L. on Cedar St.

(12) The U. S. MARINE HOSPITAL (*closed*), between 10th and 12th Sts. on Cedar St., consists of a brick administration building, two frame ward buildings, and a brick commissariat. A boardwalk, roofed and elevated, connects the four structures. On the grounds are physician's quarters and a morgue.

The U. S. Marine Hospital was built in 1885, formally opened the following year, and thereafter maintained until 1915. It was re-opened for a short time in the course of the World War. Sick and injured marine workers now receive hospitalization at St. Mary's Infirmary.

Left from Cedar St. on 9th St.

In the steeple of (13) ST. PATRICK'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH, 9th and Washington Ave., is the timepiece of downtown Cairo and the bells that announce the hours and quarter-hours to the city. The large bell that sounds the hours was presented to the church by the Hibernian Fire Company when volunteer companies were replaced by a municipal fire department in 1898. The small bell that sounds the quarter-hours was donated to the first church of Cairo in 1838 by a Missouri planter.

*Right from 9th St. on Washington Ave.; L. from
Washington Ave. on 8th St.*

Eighth St., between Washington and Commercial Aves., is an extension of the business district on Commercial Ave., which in turn was an outgrowth of the one-time business district on the Ohio Levee. Commercial Ave., R. and L. of 8th St., is lined with heavily corniced and pilastered shops which date from the seventies.

Right from 8th St. on Ohio St.

The concrete wall (L) which extends along (14) the OHIO LEVEE from 2nd to 18th Sts., was started by the city of Cairo and, in 1936, improved and strengthened by the Federal Government at a cost of \$430,000. Opposite the wall are rows of superannuated stores, taverns, and warehouses that, save for faded paint, empty windows, and flaking stone, compose the levee-front that Mark Twain saw from the pilot-house of Mississippi steamboats. Seventy-five years ago Ohio St. was thronged with travelers, merchants, roustabouts, and steamboatmen. The air resounded with strident whistles, churning paddle-wheels, and the shouts of exasperated mates.

Today Ohio St. is silent. The warehouses hold no cotton or tobacco; from the taverns come no boasts of "hard-driving" pilots about the speed of their steamboats; and the shops, embellished with carved cornices and wrought-iron "galleries," are without stocks or customers.

At 619 Ohio St. is (15) a BOAT STORE, last of the many shops that once housed this typically American trade on the Ohio levee. Boat stores were to rivermen what general stores are to farmers. In them could be purchased meat, rope, oakum, tobacco, and, in short, whatever was needed aboard a keelboat, steamboat, rowboat, or raft.

At 609 Ohio St. is (16) the OHIO BUILDING, a three-story structure built about 1858. The second-floor front, as indicated by a bronze plaque beside the entrance, was the HEADQUARTERS OF GEN. GRANT between September 1861 and April 1862.

At the intersection of Ohio St. and 6th St. is a passageway (L) known as (17) the GAP, which leads through the

concrete wall onto the riverfront. A bronze plaque imbedded in the wall near the "Gap" relates that Flag Officer Andrew Hull Foote assembled the Western Gunboat Flotilla in the harbor below.

Visible upstream from this point is the ILLINOIS CENTRAL BRIDGE, a truss structure designed by George S. Morison, which, when completed in 1889 at a cost of \$2,952,368, was the longest metallic bridge in the world (2 miles). The completion of this bridge marked the beginning of uninterrupted rail transportation between the Great Lakes and the Gulf of Mexico.

Visible downstream is the OHIO RIVER HIGHWAY BRIDGE, a graceful steel and concrete structure completed in 1938. Its total length, including approaches, is 6,229 feet. The cost of three million dollars was shared by the Public Works Administration and the States of Illinois and Kentucky. Chief among those credited for its construction is Ray Williams of Cairo, who, after prolonged efforts, succeeded in awakening governmental authorities to the need of a highway span across the Ohio at Cairo. Here, in addition to major state roads, converge three trans-continental highways: US 51 from Hurley, Wis., to New Orleans, La.; US 60, from Los Angeles, Calif., to Norfolk, Va.; and US 62, from El Paso, Tex., to Niagara Falls, N. Y.

Right from Ohio St. on 6th St.

(18) The two-story brick building at the SW. corner of Commercial Ave. and 6th St., served as the CIVIL WAR POST OFFICE of Cairo. The structure was built in 1855 for merchants who that year advertised in the *Cairo Times*: "S. Wilson and Brother, having completed and stocked their new store . . . invite an inspection of same by steamboatmen and Families. N. B. Our store will be kept open Day and Night for the accommodation of steamboats."

(19) The CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER, NE. corner of Washington Ave. and 6th St., is a Gothic structure of Makanda brownstone, built in 1888. The Episcopal congregation of Cairo was organized in 1841 when the Right Reverend Philander Chase, first Episcopal Bishop of Illinois, ap-

pointed J. P. Ingraham "lay reader among the Episcopalians of Cairo."

At 608 Washington Ave. is a widespread ginkgo. Although indigenous to the Orient, these delicately leafed trees, commonly planted near Chinese temples, thrive at Cairo. The exact date of their introduction is unknown.

(20) The ARMORY OF COMPANY K, 130th Infantry of the Illinois National Guard, 410 Washington Ave., is a brick structure of modern design, built in 1931 at a cost of \$200,000. It contains club rooms, conference rooms, a target range, and an auditorium that seats 2,500.

Left from Washington Ave. on 2nd St.

(21) The HALLIDAY HOTEL (*guide fee to non-guests, 15c*), 2nd and Ohio Sts., is a five-story L-shaped structure with stone quoins, an ornate cupola, and a mansard-like roof from which project dormer windows. Excepting the south half on Ohio St., construction of this building began in the summer of 1857. Thirty tons of slate for its roof were lost on February 4, 1858, when the *Colonel Crosman* burst a boiler near New Madrid, Mo., and sank with twelve passengers aboard. A second set-back came in June 1858 when a flood undermined the nearly completed building and caused parts of the walls to collapse. Despite these reverses the structure was completed in 1859 and opened in January of that year as the St. Charles Hotel. Of this hostelry the *Guide Americain* published in Paris, France, 1859, said that it was one "which would honor the finest city of both worlds."

When Cairo became an army depot in 1861, a war correspondent for *Harper's Weekly* reported that "the officers . . . occupy the hotel from cellar to garrett." Most important of its notable wartime guests was Gen. U. S. Grant who occupied Room 215. From the window at the south of this chamber the General could look onto Fort Defiance and the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi. This view has been obstructed by an addition made to the hotel in 1908. The furnishings of Room 215 remain as they were when Grant lodged there.

On the walls of the hotel lobby are pictures of Fort Defiance, Civil War Cairo, gunboats of the Western Flotilla, and

a photograph of Generals Grant and McClelland posed with fellow officers before the old post office at 6th and Commercial Ave. The taproom of the hotel contains a bar, manufactured in 1859, known as "Grant's bar."

In the cellar of the hotel, under the east sidewalk, are eight dungeon-like chambers which, according to a tradition sustained by hotel employees, were used to conceal fugitive slaves and later to quarter captured Confederate troops. Research fails to substantiate either of these claims.

(22) The SITE OF FORT DEFIANCE is at the vacant area between the levee and the Big Four roundhouse, one thousand feet south of the Halliday Hotel.

Retrace 2nd St.; L. from 2nd St. on Washington Ave.

The southern extremity of Washington Ave. is the common approach to the two highway bridges at Cairo. The elevated road traverses alluvial land deposited by the Mississippi within the last century.

At 0.8 m. south of its intersection with 2nd St., Washington Ave. forks (L) to the Ohio River Highway Bridge and (R) to the MISSISSIPPI RIVER HIGHWAY BRIDGE (*sightseer's toll: car and passengers \$1.00, of which 50c is refunded if return is made in 30 minutes; pedestrians 10c*). This structure, designed by Dr. J. A. L. Waddell and built at a cost of three million dollars, was opened to traffic in September 1929. The bridge consists of a main channel span 700 feet long, three cantilever spans 1,350 feet overall, and four anchor spans 1,670 feet in total length.

The main channel span affords a view of three states and the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi. The comparatively clear Ohio and the coffee-with-cream colored Mississippi mingle imperfectly; the waters of the two rivers can be distinguished fifteen miles downstream. Some rivermen maintain, contrary to geographers, that the Mississippi flows into the Ohio.

INDUSTRIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

Cairo, as the year-around head of navigation on the Ohio and Mississippi, is a terminal point for the main barge lines

plying those rivers. A large FLOATING TERMINAL is maintained by the Federal Barge Lines at 18th St. and the Ohio Levee.

ROBERTS BROTHERS' COTTON GIN (*apply at scale-house*), 2.4 miles NW. of Cairo on Ill. 3, is the larger of the two cotton gins in Illinois. The cotton is first sorted into "top," "middlin'," and "dog-tail" grades and then transferred from the storehouse to the gins by means of a large suction pipe. The gins, operating on the same pull-through-comb principle invented by Eli Whitney, are driven by a central motor. About 2,500 bales, averaging 500 pounds per bale, are here ginned yearly.

The SWIFT & CO. OIL MILL, 4210 Sycamore St. (*generally closed during the growing season; at other times guides are supplied at the company office between 8-4 weekdays*). Visitors are shown the process of extracting oil from cottonseeds. The seeds are conveyed from the storage place by a worm screw to an apparatus where jets of compressed air blow away extraneous material. The cleaned seeds then enter linters—machines that function like cotton gins—to be stripped of fleecy fibers that escaped the gin. The "linters" thus obtained is used in the manufacture of paper, films, yarns, rayons, fabrics, batting, cellophane, lacquers, and varnishes.

The seeds are then cracked and screened to separate the hulls from the kernels. The hulls are used as stuffing, livestock feed, and as a base for explosives. The kernels are rolled and cooked; the resultant pulp is subjected to a pressure of 4,200 pounds per square inch. The crude oil that emerges is, when refined, used in salad oils, shortening, oleo-margarine, candles, glycerin, and as miner's oil. The cottonseed cake that remains is used for livestock feed.



Chronology

- 1673 Father Marquette and Louis Jolliet pass site of Cairo.
- 1682 La Salle's expedition stops at mouth of Ohio.
- 1702 Charles Juchereau de St. Denys establishes Va Bache near site of Cairo.
- 1704 Va Bache abandoned.
- 1721 Xavier de Charlevoix comments on advantages of site of Cairo.
- 1757 French build Fort Ascension on Ohio River 35 miles upstream from site of Cairo. Fort is renamed Massiac.
- 1779 George Rogers Clark stations armed boat off site of Cairo.
- 1780 Fort Jefferson established on east side of Mississippi, 5 miles south of the site of Cairo.
- 1781 Fort Jefferson attacked by Chickasaws.
- 1794 Fort Massiac rebuilt by Americans.
- 1797 Cantonment Wilkinson-Ville established on Ohio River, 18 miles upstream from site of Cairo.
- 1798 Abram Bird buys land opposite site of Cairo.
- 1807 U. S. Engineers locate and survey Third Principal Meridian beginning at mouth of the Ohio. Archie Henry surveys Township Seventeen.
- 1811 The *New Orleans* descends the Ohio and Mississippi.
- 1813 Gen. Andrew Jackson, halted by ice on the Mississippi, camps on site of Cairo with 1,500 troops.
- 1817 The *Washington* journeys to New Orleans and returns to Louisville with a full cargo.
William and Thompson Bird enter 318 acres of site of Cairo; John Comegys enters 1,800 acres.
- 1818 The City and Bank of Cairo incorporated by act of the Territorial Legislature.
- 1819 Alexander County organized.

- 1828 "Mouth of the Ohio" established.
- 1835 Site of Cairo, excepting "Mouth of the Ohio," is purchased by Judge Sidney Breese, Anthony Olney, Alexander M. Jenkins, Thomas Swanwick, Miles A. Gilbert, and David J. Baker.
- 1836 State Legislature incorporates Central Railroad Company. Darius B. Holbrook and Alexander M. Jenkins request Government aid to build Central Railroad.
- 1837 Thomas I. Jones appointed postmaster at "Mouth of the Ohio." State Legislature enacts bill for a General System of Internal Improvements.
Cairo City and Canal Company incorporated.
- 1838 John Wright & Company finance Cairo City and Canal Company bonds. William Strickland and Richard C. Taylor examine site of Cairo and submit a favorable report.
The Reverend Father C. M. Collins of Cape Girardeau, Mo., establishes a church among railroad workers camped at the site of Cairo.
- 1839 Bank of Cairo established at Kaskaskia.
- 1840 Population of Cairo estimated at 1,000.
Act for a General System of Internal Improvements is repealed.
John Wright & Company fails.
Bank of Cairo fails.
- 1841 *Tennessee Valley* launched.
Cairo declines.
- 1842 Charles Dickens visits Cairo.
- 1843 Levees completed.
Directors of Cairo City and Canal Company are incorporated as directors of the Great Western Railroad Company.
Bank of Cairo charter repealed by State Legislature.
- 1844 Cairo undamaged by great flood in Mississippi Valley.
- 1845 Charter of the Great Western Railway Company repealed.

- 1846 Cairo City and Canal Company reorganized as the Cairo City Property Trust.
- 1848 Land grant bill for a Central Railroad is passed by U. S. Senate but rejected by House.
Addison H. Sanders begins publication of the *Cairo Delta*.
- 1849 Great Western Railroad Company re-incorporated; surrenders its charter several months later.
Anti-Rogue meeting held at Cairo.
- 1850 Federal Government grants Illinois 2,500,000 acres to aid construction of a Central Railroad.
Population: 242 (U. S. Census).
- 1851 Illinois Central Railroad Company incorporated.
Col. Samuel Staats Taylor, Trustee of the Cairo City Property Trust, becomes resident of Cairo.
Ground broken at Cairo for the Illinois Central Railroad.
- 1853 Public sale of lots begun.
First public school opened.
- 1854 Cairo connected by rail with East St. Louis.
Cairo designated as a port of delivery.
First St. Patrick's Church built in sections at St. Louis and assembled at Cairo.
- 1855 Cairo incorporated as town; five trustees elected.
Illinois Central Railroad completed between Cairo and Chicago.
Court of common pleas established.
Presbyterian Church built.
- 1856 First jail built.
Voluntary patrol organized; shortly superseded by paid policemen.
William Thackeray visits Cairo.
- 1857 City charter granted.
Methodist Episcopal Church built.
- 1858 Steamboat line between Cairo and New Orleans established by Illinois Central Railroad.
Cairo flooded.

- 1859 Independent Fire Company No. 1 organized.
Cairo becomes the seat of Alexander County.
- 1860 Population: 2,188 (U. S. Census).
- 1861 Camp Defiance built.
Grant establishes headquarters at Cairo.
Western Flotilla assembled at Cairo.
Battle of Belmont.
- 1862 Grant leaves Cairo with 17,000 troops; Fort Henry
and Fort Donelson captured; 14,000 Confederate
prisoners transported to Cairo.
Anthony Trollope visits Cairo.
- 1863 Vicksburg falls.
Cairo becomes base of Mississippi Squadron.
- 1864 Female Academy of the Sisters of Loretto established.
- 1865 Population estimated at 8,569.
Alexander County Courthouse completed.
Cairo Association of Commerce organized.
Business section damaged by incendiaries.
- 1866 Parochial school established.
Egyptian Baseball Club of Cairo plays first game
with the Monitor Club of Mound City and loses 71-38.
Two Johnson Clubs organized by admirers of the im-
peached President.
- 1867 Ground broken for the customhouse.
Steamboat arrivals: 4,832.
- 1868 Cornerstone of customhouse laid.
Philharmonic Society organized.
- 1869 Tobacco market established.
Young men of Cairo organize a gymnasium.
- 1870 Population: 6,267 (U. S. Census).
Natchez and *Robert E. Lee* race past Cairo.
- 1872 Railroad completed between Cairo and Vincennes.
- 1875 Cairo and St. Louis Railroad constructed.
- 1877 Women's Club and Library Association incorporated.
- 1878 Yellow fever epidemic.

- 1880 Population: 9,011 (U. S. Census).
U. S. Grant visits Cairo.
- 1881 Jefferson Davis visits Cairo.
- 1882 Congress appropriates \$60,000 for U. S. Marine Hospital.
- 1883 Safford Memorial Library built.
Brick sidewalks laid.
- 1885 Water works established.
- 1886 John A. Logan speaks at Cairo.
Marine Hospital formally dedicated.
- 1887 Illinois Central Railroad Company begins construction of bridge across the Ohio River.
- 1889 Cairo Drainage District encloses land south of Cache River with a levee.
Illinois Central Railroad Bridge completed.
William Parker Halliday dies.
- 1890 Population: 10,324 (U. S. Census).
- 1892 Electric streetcars put in operation.
- 1893 Municipal fire department replaces volunteer companies.
- 1896 Col. Samuel Staats Taylor dies.
- 1900 Population: 12,566 (U. S. Census).
- 1906 *The Hower* unveiled.
- 1907 President Theodore Roosevelt visits Cairo.
- 1909 President William H. Taft visits Cairo.
- 1910 Population: 14,548 (U. S. Census).
- 1911 Alfred Tennyson Dickens, son of Charles Dickens, visits Cairo and emphatically denies that his father speculated in Cairo City and Canal Company bonds.
- 1919 Aldermanic system replaced by commission form of government.
- 1920 Population: 15,203 (U. S. Census).
- 1927 Construction started on a highway bridge across the Mississippi.
- 1929 Mississippi River Highway Bridge dedicated by Governor Louis L. Emmerson.

- 1930 Population: 13,532 (U. S. Census).
- 1931 Armory of Company K built at a cost of \$200,000.
- 1936 Ohio River front improvement completed by Federal Government.
Bids received for construction of a highway bridge across the Ohio River.
- 1937 Cairo the only city in lower Ohio Valley to escape disastrous flood.
- 1938 Ohio River Highway Bridge opened to traffic.

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